Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

DUNN CREEK BANK STABILIZATION PROJECT
DECISION NOTICE

July 11, 2016

Project Proposal and Justification:

Dunn Creek is a 10-mile-long tributary to the Kootenai River with a total watershed area of 33.9 square miles. The portion of Dunn Creek, near the proposed project location, is classified as a Rosgen (1996) B-type stream channel, which flows exclusively through a combination of US Forest Service, state of Montana, and Weyerhaeuser Company lands. At the confluence with the Kootenai River, Dunn Creek has an estimated bankfull discharge and bankfull width of 125 cubic feet per second and 31 feet. Elevations within the Dunn Creek watershed range from 6,000 feet to 2,120 feet at the confluence of the Kootenai River, and the flow regime consists of a snowmelt runoff freshet generally in late May/early June and high elevation spring flows throughout the rest of the year. With this type of flow regime, Dunn Creek maintains a relatively consistent temperature, rarely exceeding 15 C. Westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi*) inhabit upper Dunn Creek within the proposed project area.

Excessive sediment supply within the Dunn Creek watershed contributes to upstream fish passage problems and chronic dewatering of lower Dunn Creek. The US Forest Service completed a comprehensive watershed assessment in 2013 that identified the major sources of the sediment. The largest sediment source identified was a single eroding bank at the proposed project location, which was contributing an estimated 168 tons of sediment annually to Dunn Creek. It was estimated that this single eroding bank was contributing more sediment than the combined total of the other 41 erosion sources within the entire watershed.

Montana FWP proposes to reduce sediment in Dunn Creek by stabilizing the toe of the currently eroding bank at this location. The work will include constructing a small floodplain bankfull bench where the stream channel is currently located and moving the stream channel approximately twenty feet to the north. The newly constructed stream channel will be morphologically stable and exist as a single thread channel in a similar location to where it existed prior to the mass wasting event. The project will install in-channel large woody debris and grade control structures to maintain the constructed energy dissipating pools to promote stream bed stability and enhance fisheries habitat.

Location of Project:

This project will be constructed on Dunn Creek, located approximately 15 miles northeast of the city of Libby, Montana. Specifically, the project is located within

Township 30 North, Range 29 West, Section 3, in Lincoln County . The project will occur entirely on land owned by Weyerhaeuser Company.

Environmental and Social Impacts of Project:

There may be short-term increases in turbidity during the project construction phase, but these impacts are expected to be minor and not impact aquatic life in Dunn Creek. During project construction, all reasonable and applicable Best Management Practices will be employed to minimize sedimentation to Dunn Creek. For example, we will minimize turbidity by 1) scheduling construction to occur during a low flow period, 2) completing the construction in the dry to every practicable extent, and 3) filtering water across the vegetated floodplain areas that drain away from the active channel during construction. Riparian vegetation disturbance during project implementation is expected to be minimal and will not impact the overall health of the riparian community. The project is expected to have a long-term benefit on sediment and turbidity inputs to Dunn Creek through the elimination of the large sediment source associated with the eroding bank at this site. These improvements are also expected to improve the sediment accumulation and subsequent seasonal dewatering that currently occurs in lower Dunn Creek during most years.

Public Involvement:

In compliance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act, Montana FWP prepared and circulated an environmental assessment (EA) for public comment from June 9 through July 9, 2016. Notices were placed in two local newspapers, and notification was mailed to local landowners affected by the project, local conservation groups, local timber companies, selected businesses, and natural resource agencies. Copies of the EA were made available at three local libraries and the Montana FWP Region 1 headquarters in Kalispell, and the Montana FWP internet web site. We did not receive any comments on this EA.

Decision Notice:

Based on the lack of comments we received during the public comment period for the draft EA for the Dunn Creek Bank Stabilization Project, we have prepared the final EA for this project. No changes were made to the draft EA; therefore, the draft will become the final document. Due to the urgent need to reduce sediment in Dunn Creek, I recommend that the proposed project be implemented as soon as possible.

John Frala acting for — July 11, 2016

James S. Williams — Date
Region One Supervisor